

## Keetley Utah

By Vera D. Stringham

It was a common belief in the year 1917 among successful mining men that pay ore would not be found on the eastern side of the rich and famous Park City Mining District. But Mr. George Blood and Mr. George Lambourne, executives of the then rich and flourishing Ontario and Judge mines of the famous Park City Mining District, did not hold to that theory and for several discouraging years persevered with their dream. Their funds almost depleted, they were ready to believe their peers were correct, and gave serious consideration to closing down the entire project. But lucky day. The hopes and dreams of all mining engineers that the next round of blasting would open up an ore body became a reality for Mr. Blood and Mr. Lambourne. A vast ore body was opened up and the Park Utah Mine was born. With operations at the east portal of the Ontario-Daily Drain Tunnel and a new camp grew up where camp Florence had been.

The Park Utah Mining Company was formed with Mr. George Lambourne as President, Bill Dunn as Secretary and Paul H. Hunt as Mine Manager.

Nine identical three room frame cottages, painted grey with bright green roofs, were built on the brow of the wind swept hill. The large eastern ore body was reached in 1920, after which time production and earning steadily increased.

In November 1921, Ralph and Vera (Billie) Stringham, the first permanent residents, moved into the third cottage. At that time Bill O'Brien and his wife lived in the first cottage. But Mr. O'Brien, an underground miner all of his life, died from "Miners Con" in the spring of 1922. In a year's time the new camp grew like wildfire. A new cement office was built. Also five bunk houses, a kitchen, a boarding house, and a commissary which later also housed the United States Post Office, and the Park Utah Mine was named Keetley after the engineer who had supervised the construction of the Ontario-Daily Drain Tunnel.

During the next two years several families moved into the cottages. Roy Lenzi, painter and Keetley postmaster; E. A. Hewitt, mining engineer; Mr. Cushwa who we call the "Cush", mine superintendent, replaced later by Harry Wallace; Melvin Brown, surveyor; Frank Hyde, replaced later by Speed Reynolds, master mechanic; Tom Morris, outside foreman; Mr. Hunt, manager; and Ralph Stringham, time keeper, who later became office manager and purchasing agent. The early families living up the canyon in the old Ontario houses were: Dick Glazier, Chick Woodruff and Charles Welch.

In writing a history of Keetley it is important to give a few details about the Park Utah Mine and its early settlers. Keetley was born of the Park Utah Mine and it died at the demise of the fabulous rich and historic Park City Mining District - a victim of the great depression and World War II.

Keetley children attended a one room framed school house situated on the Fisher Ranch property about a mile or more from the mine. Children walked to school. Mr. and Mrs. Victor Jackson gave the children excellent instruction. A curtain divided Mr. Jackson's older students from Mrs. Jackson's beginners. The fine red brick school house was built about 1927 but was short lived. It closed in 1931 and from then on the Keetley children were bused to Heber City schools.

The Keetley Boy Scout Troop under the direction of Wilson Young and Dick Glazier, scout masters, had the highest rating in the Timpanogos council.

During the 30's some venturesome individuals built a dance hall with a bar (at the time called a "speak easy") a short distance from the highway on the north side of the road leading to the mine. It was called the "Blue Goose" and its lifespan was short. That type of entertainment with the element it sponsored was not in keeping with the standards and lifestyle of the Keetley residents, even in those difficult days of depression when spirits needed a lift.

By 1931, after the Wall Street Market Crash of October 1929, all of the great silver-lead mines of the Park City District, including the Park Utah-renamed in 1925 to the Park Utah Consolidated Mining Company, were closed.

Five families living in the cottages remained on the payroll; the men acted as around-the-clock watchmen. A skeleton underground crew maintained the mine from flooding. The great nonferrous mining industry as of this date has never recovered.

The residents of the little town of Keetley were great people. Their children grew up to be leaders in the their chosen fields. In the early days less than half were of the Mormon faith, but they were all good people and contributed much to the progress of beautiful Heber Valley and Wasatch County.

-Vera (Billie) Stringham  
Keetley resident 1921-1946.

